

Co-Creation in the Sick Pay Area

A citizen who has been employed full-time in a company is reported sick due to depression and anxiety. The sick leave is reported to the municipality, and the benefits office receives an information form to assess whether the citizen qualifies for sickness benefits. Once it's determined that the citizen is eligible, the case is sent to the job center, where it is referred based on the expected duration of the sick leave. Since the leave is expected to exceed eight weeks, the case is assigned to Team 2 or the Field Team (only for cases involving an employer). The citizen is then invited to an initial meeting at the Job Center. Contact with the sickness benefit team begins with a phone call in which the caseworker briefly introduces themselves, followed by a letter sent via digital mail inviting the citizen to a meeting.

Curiosity About the Case

The sickness benefit team caseworker welcomes the citizen in the foyer for their first meeting. In the meeting room, the caseworker establishes the structure of the meeting, answering the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the meeting?
- What do we hope to achieve from the meeting?
- What is the agenda for the meeting?
- Who is responsible for what during and after the meeting?
- How long is allocated for the meeting?

After setting the meeting's context, the caseworker expresses curiosity about the citizen's situation, focusing on understanding their life beyond the illness itself. The caseworker is mindful of how personal narratives about their situation can shape the citizen's perception. It is essential for the citizen not to be defined solely by their illness, which should be seen as one aspect of their current situation. The caseworker begins by inquiring about the reasons for the sick leave, including the factors that led up to it, and any treatment already in progress. The caseworker also asks about the citizen's family, friends, and other support networks to understand the resources available to them. This information is then documented on a visual template with guidance from the caseworker to map the citizen's network. This collaborative template serves as a shared reference and can be taken home by the citizen as a reminder of their support system. Additionally, the caseworker provides an overview of key elements and timelines in the sickness benefit process, using another template for the citizen. These templates offer both an overview and a shared basis for discussion.

Next, the caseworker asks about the citizen's hopes and expectations going forward. Does the citizen wish to return to their previous job, or do they have different goals? The caseworker asks the following questions where appropriate in the conversation:

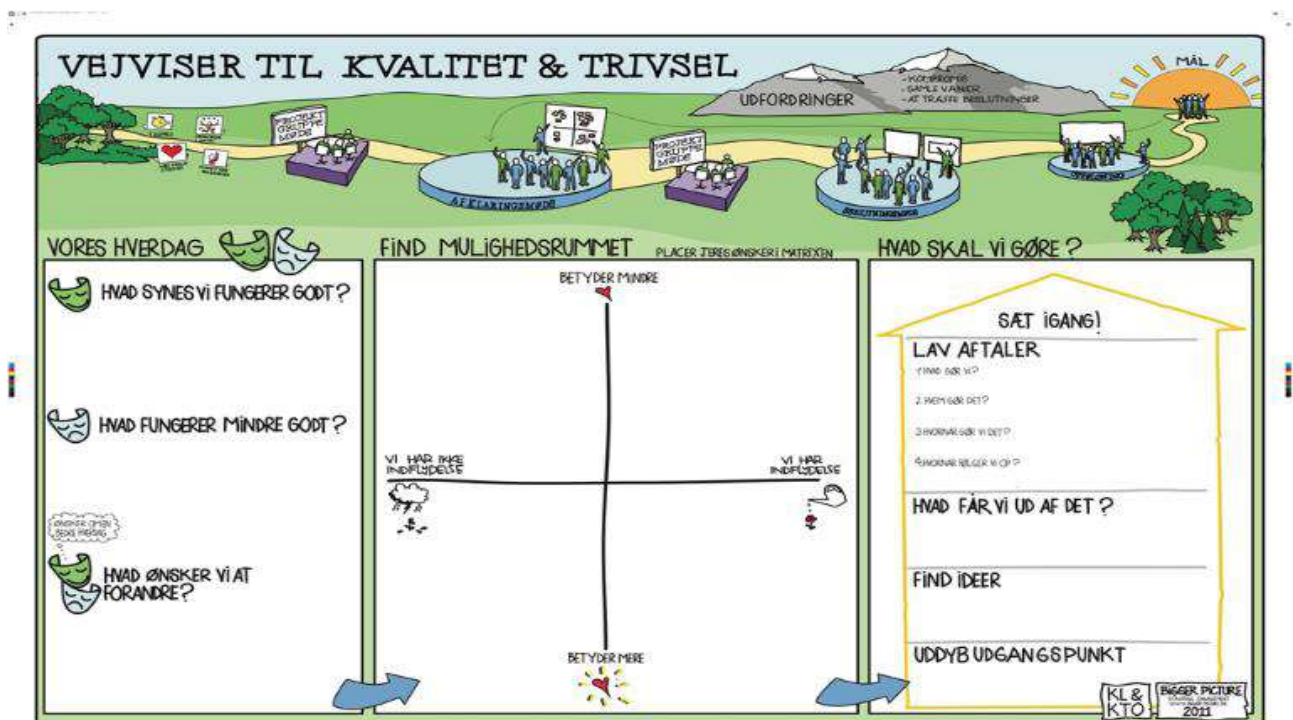
- What do you think your friends/family/acquaintances think about your sick leave?
- What activities are you still able to do despite being ill?
- What excites you and brings you joy?
- What aspects of everyday life are still going well?

The citizen shares their fear of being dismissed by their current employer. In response, the caseworker suggests a preventive meeting with an employment consultant and the employer to address this concern.

Exploration of solutions

The caseworker then focuses on exploring possible solutions with the citizen to support their current situation. The citizen expresses a desire for early retirement. Instead of dismissing this request, the caseworker remains open to the conversation, inquiring about the citizen's goals. The caseworker explains that there are many alternatives to early retirement, which they can explore together.

The caseworker and citizen use a tool called the "Well-being Framework" to examine a range of possible solutions together.



Trivselstæppet

Well-being Framework

There are various options regarding the citizen's current situation:

- Does the citizen want to return to their previous workplace?
- Can the citizen still perform their previous job?
- What other possibilities does the citizen see?

After the citizen shares their ideas, the caseworker adds information about potential solutions:

- Part-time work
- Flexible job arrangement

- Reassignment within the company
- In some cases, starting with an internship that may later transition into part-time work.

For those struggling with anxiety, being physically present at the workplace can be a way to overcome symptoms. There is also the option of personal assistance if the citizen has significantly reduced functional abilities in a specific task due to illness. The citizen may also have access to a mentorship program, where a non-municipal employee offers perspectives and guidance on future possibilities.

Caseworker's Confidence in the Citizen

The caseworker is aware of research indicating a positive correlation between the caseworker's belief in a citizen's job potential and the likelihood of the citizen returning to work. This belief is not sufficient alone but can positively influence the overall process. The caseworker is also mindful that language can shape the perception of the citizen and the narratives that develop around them. The way we discuss the citizen can either trap them in an unhelpful situation by unintentionally reinforcing a specific interpretation of a complex issue or, conversely, transform their understanding of a given situation or individual. The caseworker focuses on using communication to create nuanced stories about the citizen's situation, enhancing the citizen's perception of available options in the collaboration and, in turn, strengthening their belief in their potential. The caseworker remains aware of their own biases and expectations toward the citizen and how these influence their interaction.

Co-determination

The citizen commits to working part-time, starting with five hours, with a gradual increase over six months. Although the caseworker and citizen have agreed that this solution is optimal, the citizen remains uncertain about its feasibility. Since the caseworker finds the plan realistic, they offer encouragement based on the citizen's skills and resources, using statements like:

- "I believe it will work."
- "I believe this is a very realistic plan."
- "I believe you can do this with your skills."
- "I am convinced that you can succeed."

The caseworker knows that such statements positively impact most citizens, making them feel happier, more motivated, and more receptive to the information provided. Often, these statements elicit a smile or a visible reaction, showing that the citizen feels supported in their journey toward rejoining the workforce.

The caseworker is also mindful that these statements can provoke some citizens. To avoid causing the citizen to feel pressured, it's essential to adapt these expressions to the citizen's self-confidence and assess the plan's realism.

Co-responsibility

The citizen agrees to:

- Report to work at the agreed-upon times.
- Attend follow-up meetings every four weeks with the caseworker or employment consultant for support with any challenges.

- Continue treatment for anxiety and depression with a professional.

The caseworker ensures that the citizen feels ownership over the plan. Consistent follow-up is vital to maintaining the citizen's motivation and creating momentum for their return to the labor market.